

# Community Health Worker Skills to Care Learning and Application in Mentor Mom support groups

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# Background

- Problem Statements.
- For CHW's to improve services to patients, and communities and add value to the health services they need knowledge and skills. Small Projects Foundation and the Perinatal Education Trust have pioneered a modularised, group learning program for CHW's in the Eastern Cape (based on proven methods used for midwives and staff nurses). Known as Skills to Care, modules were developed to address mother/baby care and perinatal HIV.
- PMTCT, Early Infant Diagnosis and Care, Maternal and Child Health are dependent on pregnant women and new moms attending ANC and PNC classes early and regularly for PMTCT, MCH, nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding and vaccinations. Barriers to attendance include transport, poor service, lack of local support. Skilled CHW's running home village based Mentor Mom Support Groups can overcome these.

# Data Methods

- Skills to Care
- Modules in booklet form contain basic (MomConnect related) but essential information. They provide question and answer style information, a set of case studies and multiple choice questions. CHW's study the module in groups (fortnightly in-service learning at facility) and independently. A professional nurse facilitates group learning, building a common community of practice. CHW's learning is reinforced in supervised practice after sessions. A return date is agreed where post-testing of knowledge is done.
- Two research studies have been concluded. 165 CHW's, from clinics, NGO's and WBOT's were pre- and post-tested using multiple choice questions on 4 modules. The Initial study (n=97) produced excellent results with a 96% pass rate (participants had to score 80% or more to pass). This dropped to an 80% pass rate with the second study. Further qualitative research was done through focus group discussions with CHW's and individual interviews with nurse supervisors and patients to identify results of the training.

# Data Methods

- Mentor Mom Support groups
- 49 CHW's from 8 clinics in Nyandeni (OR Tambo District, Eastern Cape) were trained in Skills to Care Modules (maternal and baby care, growth monitoring and nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding and perinatal HIV). 20 pregnant women and mothers were identified by each CHW (and clinic) in their home village. A Mentor Mom (MM) Support group was set up by the CHW and Moms per community to meet fortnightly at the MM's identified venue and times. The CHW facilitates 6 sessions per group. MM's who attend 2 consecutive sessions received 18 eggs for themselves and children over 6 months. Sessions included an educational ANC/PNC class, Q&A among members, checks on clinic attendance, growth monitoring of babies, mutual support and self-care among mothers. Two excellent MM's are further trained and support the group further. 1277 members of MM support groups have attended 6 consecutive ANC and PNC classes. Improved attendance at clinic appointments is reported by clinics and MM's and verified by CHW's. MM's appreciate the support in their local village,

# Key Results

- Skills to Care Learning model
- Major improvement in CHW knowledge in 4 Skills to Care modules and support to patients after learning sessions: 96% pass rate (n=97) and 80% pass rate (n=68)
- CHW's, professional nurses and patients described improved levels of CHW competence and confidence
- CHW's were delighted with this way of learning
- A common community of practice was established between nurses, DoH clinic CHW's, NGO CHW's and WBOT's
- Improved co-ordination and joint planning was possible due to in-service learning groups
- Professional nurses from facilities can facilitate learning
- Costs to implement this learning method are minimal

# Key Results

- CHW led Mentor Mom Support groups
- Community based support groups are welcomed by pregnant women and new moms due to access, convenience and support
- Skilled CHW's can run these effectively if given skills and simple modules
- 100% attendance by 1277 pregnant women of six consecutive ANC and PNC classes (and 354 more are on a waiting list)
- Improved clinic attendance by members of MM support group
- Growth monitoring shows babies are thriving
- Improved vaccination coverage rates for babies
- Improved adherence by HIV positive women

# Conclusions

- Skills to Care Learning Model
- The model is readily scalable
- It requires the provision of booklets and trained professional nurses (see [www.bettercare.co.za](http://www.bettercare.co.za)) to be assigned by facilities to support CHW learning.
- It is cost effective and improves service quality
- It builds a common community of practice and improves planning and co-ordination between WBOT's, clinic staff and NGO CHW's
- The Skills to Care methodology requires only modules, trained professional nurses and CHW's. It is adaptable to a range of subjects, builds and improves a community of practice, allows debriefing and improves uptake of HIV testing, prevention, treatment, long term adherence and retention. Community health workers love it!

# Conclusions

- CHW led Mentor Mom Support groups
- Skilled CHW led Mentor Mom Support groups work
- Pregnant women and new moms find it accessible, convenient and supportive
- 100% attendance at six consecutive ANC/PNC classes and early booking by pregnant women is startling
- This model can reach and retain pregnant women and new moms in care
- Eggs as an incentive can improve nutritional status of pregnant women, moms and babies older than 6 months
- Such groups, led by a CHW's who spend only 2 days a month with each group could easily be replicated.



# Recommendations

- The Skills to Care Methodology can be replicated as an in-service and distance learning methodology in most primary health care services.
- Further piloting in other areas is advisable
- Linkage of this Skills to Care methodology and [www.bettercare.co.za](http://www.bettercare.co.za) materials with MomConnect and NurseConnect initiatives is advisable
- The CHW led Mentor Mom Support group can be replicated where there are skilled CHW's and simple modules
- This simple initiative is very effective and produces excellent results
- It is recommended that this be further piloted in other sites

# CHW Skills to Care Learning and Application In Mentor Mom Support Groups : Cromhout, Paul, Small Projects Foundation

## Significant Points

- Significant Point 1: Skills to Care Methodology can effectively and at low cost, improve skills and confidence of CHW;s and improve services to patients
- Significant Point 2: CHW's love learning through the Skills to Care Methodology
- Significant Point 3: CHW led Mentor Moms Support Groups are effective in recruiting and retaining pregnant women in care and ensure regular ANC/PNC class attendance

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